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Argentina  
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March 13, 1984

To: Elliott Abrams

Subject: Mignone: Argentina

Today I attended the IPS seminar on "Human Rights and the Reconstruction of Democracy" in Argentina, addressed by Emilio Mignone and Juan Mendez (ref. attached). I was there for only about half an hour, listening to Mignone in Spanish, with Mendez translating sentence by sentence. Some of Mignone's remarks are summarized below.

We of CELS (Center for Legal and Social Studies) strongly support the Alfonsin regime, in general. The new Government represents a major step forward for Argentina, a clean break with the last 54 years. I do not believe Alfonsin will be overthrown, even though there are rumors of a coup. Nevertheless I feel the GOA has made some mistakes in its human rights tactics, in contrast to its commendable human rights objectives. For example, the Commission appointed to investigate crimes and abuses is made up of inexperienced public figures who are uncertain of their powers, how to proceed, etc. The Commission should have been selected from members of the legislature. Another problem is that military law is being given precedence over civilian, or national, law. Military men who have committed crimes should be judged by the law of the land, not by military regulations. Meanwhile, some human rights abuses continue, of course. For example, the police continue to torture. But that is not the fault of the GOA; these things take time to change, and Alfonsin's intentions are excellent. For years I was unable to speak out publicly. Now I have so many invitations I cannot accept them all.

George Lister

cc: Jim Thyden - Bob Snyder

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